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**SPEECH**

**OF**

**MR. HILLIARD, OF ALABAMA,**

**ON**

**THE OREGON QUESTION,**

**DELIVERED IN**

**THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES, JAN. 6, 1846.**

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**WASHINGTON:**

**J. & G. S. GIDEON, PRINTERS.**

**1846.**

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## SPEECH.

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The SPEAKER announced, as the unfinished business, the following joint resolution, reported by Mr. C. J. INGERSOLL, from the Committee on Foreign Affairs:

*Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the President of the United States forthwith cause notice to be given to the Government of Great Britain that the Convention between the United States and Great Britain, concerning the Territory of Oregon, of the sixth of August, 1827, signed at London, shall be annulled and abrogated twelve months after the expiration of the said term of notice, conformably to the second article of the said convention of the sixth of August, 1827.*

Mr. HILLIARD, being entitled to the floor, rose and said:

MR. SPEAKER: In entering upon the discussion of the great question, at present before the House, it will be proper for a moment to recur to the history of the relations of the Government of the United States with that of Great Britain in regard to the Territory of Oregon. It is well known, that, after several fruitless attempts had been made to adjust the difference between them in relation to the sovereignty of that district of country, both Powers had at length agreed to adjourn the question over, and they had mutually entered into the convention of 1818, by which treaty it was understood that the two parties were to enjoy certain privileges in regard to the territory, which were clearly specified and defined. In the summer of 1827, when this convention was about to expire, by its own limitation, provision was made to perpetuate this mutual understanding, simply with the purpose of preserving peace between the parties, and without yielding any portion of the original claims which had been respectively put forth. It is now proposed in this House to terminate that convention, conformably to a provisional article embodied in the instrument itself.

Should that termination be brought about as proposed, what will be the relative positions of this country and of Great Britain in regard to the Oregon territory? For an answer to this question we are referred back to the relation subsisting between them before the convention was entered into. That relation must, then, be renewed, and the two nations will stand as conflicting claimants before the civilized world for the entire control over the whole territory. Here, then, comes in the question as to our title—whether founded on discovery, exploration, and settlement, by our own citizens, or resting on the claims of Spain; for we shall bring both our own title and the title of Spain to fortify our position, when we meet our competitor in the presence of the civilized world. I shall not enter on this question of title, it has recently been exhibited with great ability, and I should only render myself tedious by repeating arguments which have already been placed in the clearest light. I simply desire to say, that, on the question of our title

to Oregon, I rely mainly on the previous title of Spain, although I am far from underrating the merits of discoveries and settlements in that region by our own enterprising citizens. I admit these, and duly appreciate them; but, as I have already said, my main reliance is placed on the Spanish title—a title which we did not possess at the time our dispute with England arose; for it is my belief that, had this title then been ours, the convention of 1818 would never have had an existence. So long as this title remained in the hands of Spain, Great Britain treated it with the contempt which marked all her conduct towards that Power. Pitt's rooted aversion to Spain is well known; he inherited it from his father, and it made itself manifest in all his public conduct, when the occasion provoked it; indeed, it was but the sentiment of the British nation. So that, although the moral power of that title was as great as it is now, it was not regarded with the respect which was due to it. That title has been recently so convincingly, I may say, so triumphantly, pleaded by our present Secretary of State, that it must have carried actual dismay into the British cabinet, and it has certainly placed our own claim to the country upon more elevated and commanding ground than it ever stood on before. It is now an *American* title; and, with whatever contempt Great Britain might have felt herself warranted in treating it when in the possession of *Spain* she will not so treat it when it is put forth before the world as the claim of the United States. I do not speak this boastfully, but I desire that Great Britain shall know that we comprehend our rights; and I thank God we are able to maintain them.

I do not desire, sir, to be understood as putting out of the question our own American title.

A late Secretary of State, (Mr. CALHOUN,) whose fame is commensurate with the extent of civilization, has placed the American claim on Captain Gray's discovery of the mouth of the Columbia river, and on that admitted principle of international law, that, by whatsoever nation the mouth of a river is discovered, to that nation belongs the whole of the valley which is drained by its waters. I feel this claim to be of great consequence; and I must confess that I felt the greatest amazement when, in the debate of Saturday, a distinguished gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. WINTHROP) disclaimed all reliance upon it. Rich as Massachusetts is—and I acknowledge her rich in all that can give elevation to a State—I do not think her, however, in circumstances to abandon such an honor as this discovery. The gentleman came to this House, as I have understood, with a rich inheritance of ancestral fame, to which he has largely added in well-merited reputation of his own; but if he thinks himself entitled to disclaim and cast away this discovery by Captain Gray, I will take it up. If *Massachusetts* cast him off, I will claim him for the *United States*. The gentleman has said that Captain Gray, as a navigator in the waters of the Pacific, had no thought of making discoveries on behalf of his country, or of adding anything to her territorial claims, but had simply been prosecuting a little harmless trade in fish and peltry. This may be so; but still he coasted those shores in a vessel of his own, with our national flag waving over his head; in a vessel which, according to the doctrine of an eminent statesman, whose fame belongs alike to *Massachusetts* and to his whole country, was part and parcel of the American soil.

Mr. Webster, in his correspondence with Lord Ashburton, states the doctrine with great clearness and force.

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"But, nevertheless, the law of nations, as I have stated it, and the statutes of governments founded on that law, as I have referred to them, show that enlightened nations, in modern times, do clearly hold that the jurisdiction and laws of a nation accompany her ships, not only over the high seas, but into ports and harbors, or wheresoever else they may be water-borne, for the general purpose of governing and regulating the rights, duties, and obligations of those on board thereof; and that to the extent of the exercise of this jurisdiction, they are considered as parts of the territory of the nation herself."

This principle, thus laid down, is not likely to be disputed hereafter among civilized nations; and it results from it, that while the jurisdiction of the nation silently accompanies the vessel in all its course, extending over it sleepless and efficient protection, all the discoveries which that vessel makes are for the nation. It was in this spirit that Captain Gray, when in that distant region he entered the mouth of that great stream which had never before been entered by any navigator, gave to it the name of his ship—COLUMBIA—thus identifying with it through all time memories of his country and his home.

[Mr. WINTHROP rose to explain, and the floor being yielded to him for that purpose, he went on to say, that the honorable gentleman from Alabama seemed entirely to have misunderstood him. So far from disclaiming or casting away this discovery of Captain Gray, he had, on the contrary, expressly said that he considered it, after all, as our best resort, and as containing in itself the best claim we could show to the possession of Oregon; and he had added, that Massachusetts, and especially the people of Boston, felt proud of Gray as a fellow-citizen, and of his discovery as shedding a lustre upon the city of his birth and the State of which he was a citizen.]"

Mr. HILLIARD resumed, and said he was glad to be set right, and, if he had misapprehended the gentleman, to have that misapprehension corrected. He certainly had not intended to misrepresent him.

[Mr. WINTHROP. Certainly not.]

Still, sir, it seems to me that the gentleman attaches too little value and importance to the title, of any sort, which we hold to the Oregon country. When Captain Gray trod the deck of his ship, having the American colors at his mast-head, whatever new territory or river he discovered was for us, the people of the United States. I congratulate Massachusetts that one of her native born sons has by his enterprise added so much splendor to the records of early discovery on this continent. Honored be the name of Gray! I am prepared to stand by the title of which he has furnished so valuable an element. As to the gentleman from Massachusetts, (Mr. WINTHROP,) I can say with entire truth, that I greatly admire his spirit and bearing; on most points we entirely agree; but I cannot consent with the gentleman, in any degree, to disparage our title, because it is to be set against that of a powerful and imperious nation. I will not yield a title of it. The gentleman talked slightly about musty records. I do not share in this feeling; I reverence musty records, and hold them as precious. With a musty record I can upturn the whole face of human society. With the musty record of Magna Charta in my hand, I can revolutionize the face of Europe, if permitted to present its principles to the minds of her population. I trust that if the dust of age and neglect should ever gather on the sacred volume of our Constitution, and there be a descendant of mine on this floor, representing a South-

ern people as I do, he will be able to call up from that musty record a moral power potent enough to shield their liberties, and to resuscitate and bless the condition of society throughout this land.

On the evidence contained in musty records I found my belief that every inch of Oregon is ours. I can see no break in our title from latitude  $42^{\circ}$  to latitude  $54^{\circ} 40'$ . I do not say that I would not arrange for any portion of the territory lying between those parallels. It is not for me to make any such arrangement. That power has been placed by the Constitution in the hands of another branch of this Government. It is altogether proper that the President should regard all the great interests of the country in adjusting a difficult national question. I am not disposed to disturb his functions. I do not wish to commit the House on that point. But I hold our title to be so clear and so capable of demonstration, that but for the colossal power of Great Britain, and the haughtiness with which she has been accustomed to treat all other nations in the conduct of her diplomacy, I cannot but believe that she would withdraw from the contest overwhelmed by the force of argument which she cannot refute.

But there are some who admit that Great Britain cannot maintain her claims to the territory in dispute upon the grounds to which I have referred, who yet insist that she may extend her possessions in that region upon the principle of *continuity of domain*. What right has Great Britain to set up a claim to Oregon on the ground of continuity of territory? Is the seat of her sovereignty on this continent? No; her possessions here and her rights here are colonial. This continent is the seat of our empire. In this view, the venerable gentleman from Massachusetts, (Mr. ADAMS,) and all who have examined the subject will, I am sure, concur, and they will bear me out in saying, that this ought to outweigh every other consideration in a question of this character. The seat of England's sovereignty is across the Atlantic. Holding here only colonial possessions, she seeks to extend them further, when neither the compactness nor the security of her empire requires it, and when her claims come in conflict with those of a nation holding their original sovereignty on this continent.

If, then, our title to the territory of Oregon is clear, the next question which presents itself is as to our wisest course to perfect that title. What course ought we to take to secure the possession of that which is ours by title? In my judgment, and I make the assertion with profound deference to the opinions of others, "inactivity" is no longer "masterly." I repeat it, *inactivity is no longer masterly*. There are occasions when, to save what is dear to us, it becomes necessary to act promptly—to act with decision, and to act immediately, is often the only way to act with effect. I do not see that we have any course left but to act, whether we regard the perpetuity of peace or the possession of the territory in dispute. If we would avoid war, we must have the causes of war passed upon and settled. It is not always by adjourning over great, and difficult, and delicate questions, that war can be avoided. Our condition in regard to Oregon is such as to demand action—intelligent, prompt, decisive, comprehensive action. If we should leave this question open, in the present state of the two countries, who can avoid seeing that war is inevitable?

When Lord Ashburton returned to England, after having successfully arranged the difficulties about the northeastern boundary, and was congratulated in the British Parliament on his success, I believe that experienced

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statesman said that the national sky was then clear and without a cloud, saving one minute speck upon the horizon, which he did not doubt would soon disappear. But how has his prediction been fulfilled? That little speck, then no bigger than a man's hand, and scarce perceptible on the far-off margin of the heavens, has since become a dark, and lowering, and portentous cloud; it has swept over the face of the sky, and hangs all over our northwestern frontier, gloomy as night. The whole aspect of the question is changed; and, if we wish now to maintain our position as the friends of peace, it is time we awoke to action. We must assert our rights; we must shun a temporizing policy; we must adopt vigorous measures, and carry them to the very farthest verge to which they can be maintained without a violation of the terms of the convention. Otherwise, we shall find that the population of the two nations intermixing in that remote territory, carrying with them the prejudices and the heat of the contending parties, protected by and amenable to conflicting jurisdictions, entering into the eager competition of trade—will, at no distant day, precipitate us into a war with Great Britain.

Nor, sir, is the danger of war all that is involved in the adjournment of this question; we incur the danger of losing the territory altogether. And why do I think so? From the whole colonial history of the British empire. There was a time when Spain possessed great and extensive colonies, but they have dwindled away. There was a time when France could boast of her colonies, but they have dwindled away. There was a time when Holland swept the seas with her fleets, and held important colonial possessions, but they have dwindled away. In the mean time Great Britain has gone on, growing in strength, extending her power, and spreading her armies abroad, into every part of the habitable world. Her language, her laws, her military prowess, fill both hemispheres, while she has belted the globe with her fortresses, to say nothing of her colonies. The British people and their Government well understand the management of colonies. When in Europe, a short time since, a distinguished British diplomatist said to me, "Sir, France does not understand how to manage colonies; we do understand it;" and he spoke the truth. Since the year 1609, Great Britain has acquired no less than forty-one colonies, twenty-four of which she has obtained by settlement, nine by capitulation, and eight by cession. In the possession of Oregon, she seeks to plant herself there permanently, and is employing all her power and all her skill to establish her authority, over the greater part of that region.

At Willamette Falls, in latitude 45° 20', there is a prosperous and growing settlement; a factory, established by the Hudson's Bay company, is in operation there, under the control of Dr. McLaughlin, factor to that company, and whose co-partner is Her Majesty's magistrate for that district. This settlement, sometimes called Oregon city, is under the influence of this Dr. McLaughlin, a man of fine person, of finished and winning manners, of great wealth and unbounded hospitality—an intelligent man, long experienced in business, and well informed on all subjects connected with his position. Under the auspices of such an individual, have we not reason to expect that Great Britain will go on to plant herself in the possession and occupancy of the country in such a manner that we cannot expel her, at least not without a severe struggle?

If we refuse to protect the thousands of our own citizens who are, and



the multitude more who soon will be, in Oregon, may they not conclude, as they are neglected by their own Government, to throw off their allegiance and go over to a government which never refuses and never forgets to protect its citizens in every part of the world? Their right to do so is a recognised principle of international law. If the Government refuses its protection, citizens may throw off their allegiance, and transfer themselves to the jurisdiction of a government that will do its duty. Or, they may determine to set up for themselves, and rear an independent and rival government. Under these circumstances, I am decidedly in favor of extending to them our laws and protection.

I propose now, sir, to consider the action we should take in carrying out this important policy; and first, as to this question of *notice*. I think we ought at once to provide for giving the notice so often referred to in this debate; nay, I think we must do it. Yet, I am not for doing it, either in the form proposed in the bill reported by the honorable chairman of the Committee on Territories, (Mr. DOUGLASS,) or in the resolution more recently reported by the distinguished chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs. It is my misfortune to differ in opinion from both, and it is my purpose, before resuming my seat, to offer an amendment, striking out in the resolution the words which refer to giving this notice by a joint act of both Houses, and inserting a provision, empowering the President of the United States to give such notice, when, in his opinion, the public welfare shall require it. I was at first inclined, with the gentleman from Kentucky near me, (Mr. DAVIS,) to consider the giving of this notice as an exercise of the Executive power with which the House had nothing to do; but, on further reflection, I have changed that opinion. It is very true, that the formation of such a convention is an exercise of the treaty-making power; but it does not, therefore, follow, that the dissolving the convention must be the exclusive act of that power. That is a different question—because the “Government of the United States,” according to the terms of the convention, was one of the high contracting parties; and of that Government, this House, as well as the President and Senate, constitute a part. Yet there are grave reasons why Congress, instead of taking the power into its own hands, should lodge it in the hands of the President. I shall not be suspected of a disposition to increase, unnecessarily, the power of the President; but I am willing to give the present Executive the power which he asks in this matter. I am for giving to the Executive all the energy and efficiency which he requires to act in a matter of this kind. The country has placed the President where he is, and the responsibility is his. When the Government of Great Britain learns that he is clothed with this power, they will comprehend what a mighty element it is, and will be the more inclined to act with deference to him and to us. It seems to me, that all the friends of peace in the House should consent to such an arrangement. It has been said, very generally, that negotiations have been renewed at London.

[Mr. C. J. INGERSOLL, chairman of the Committee of Foreign Affairs. That is not a fact. They have not been renewed.]

If not, they may yet be. I trust they will be. I am for multiplying the chances for adjustment and peace. The President will have the whole field before him, and I am for lodging with him this great element of negotiation. As proposed by the bill from the Committee on Territories, and by the resolution now under consideration; the notice is made absolute—it goes

not conclude, as their allegiance forgets to propose so is a refusal of its proposes themselves to they may del rival govern- of extending forth in a hostile shape, and no choice is left to the President as to times and seasons, which are often matters of great importance. The power, if given as I propose it, will be quite as effectual as if exercised absolutely by the House; yet it will leave to the wisdom and discretion of the Executive the selection of the manner and time of giving the notice. It imposes on him no responsibility which any Executive ought to wish to shun. It places him in a grand position, invested with ample power, conferred by the confidence of his country, and it opens before him the opportunity of accomplishing great good for the nation and for the world.

I wish to present another view. I desire the adoption of a different plan from that which has been reported from the Committee on Territories, as to the extension of our laws over Oregon. It is a part of the plan proposed by the committee, to make donations of land to actual settlers, and this, while the convention still continues in force; this I cannot but consider as a violation of the spirit of that instrument. I do not think so as to the principle of settlement—our people may go to that country in any numbers, and they ought to be protected. The bill provides, too, for the extension of the laws of Iowa over Oregon. This will be a mere nominal extension of jurisdiction, and will result in no practical good. It will serve only to make the settlers in that remote district of country acquainted with our laws by their threatenings, but the measure can afford them no efficient protection. I should prefer the establishment of a territorial government, so organized as not to conflict with the provisions of the Convention. My plan would be to send them out a governor, a sagacious, prudent, experienced, cautious man, who would be able to sweep the whole field with his eye, and give information and counsel to the Government here as to what was doing, and what ought to be done. If any gentleman doubts our power to establish such a government over the whole of the territory, or apprehends collision with the British authorities, then, I say, place your governor south of the Columbia river; that, at least, is a portion of the territory which, I presume, no gentleman in the House is prepared to surrender. The language of every one here, I doubt not, will be like that of the poet:

“And many a banner shall be torn,  
And many a knight to ground be borne,  
And many a sheaf of shafts be spent,  
Ere Scotland's king shall cross the Trent.”

The officers of the Hudson's Bay company are there, and British magistrates of some description are there also; why should not our officers and our magistrates be there too? Will not their authority carry with it respect for the American laws and Government?

Besides the measure which I have just been considering, certain resolutions have been introduced here, which I desire for a moment to refer to. Those offered by the gentleman from Massachusetts, (Mr. WINTHROP,) which look to the adjustment of the Oregon dispute without war, I certainly admire. The spirit in which they are presented calls for my profoundest respect, and I hail them as the exponent of the sentiment of an enlightened and Christian age; and yet I cannot vote for them. In my humble judgment, the matter to which they refer—the mode of adjusting a pending political question—belongs to another branch of this Government, and their adoption by us might seriously interfere with the exercise of its functions. As to the counter resolution introduced by the gentleman from Illinois,

(Mr. DOUGLASS,) I am decidedly opposed to it. It declares that the whole of Oregon is ours, up to parallel 54° 40', and is intended to commit this House against any negotiation which brings us less than that extent of territory. Now, I have already stated my personal conviction as to the extent of our rights, but I will not consent to express any legislative opinion on a matter which clearly belongs to another department. I am for giving the Executive full discretion and the amplest scope. This is no party question—it sweeps beyond all such considerations, and, in the measures connected with it, party feelings and influences should be far from every mind. The country is in a crisis. I feel it to be a crisis; and I am ready to say, God speed! to the man who shall carry us honorably and safely through it! At an hour like this I will vote for no resolutions embodying opinions on the one hand or the other. Let the Government take ground which is impregnable, and maintain it with a firmness that shall command respect.

And now, sir, I am met with the question, "Suppose these measures should lead to war?" I do not think they will lead to war; they ought not. But we are not at liberty, in this matter, to turn away from a just consideration of the national rights and the national honor, to look at consequences. We are going onward, as we should, protecting our own citizens. We are following the example of the Republic of Rome, which caused Roman law to prevail, and the ægis of Roman protection to be extended wherever Roman citizens passed. I abhor war. Reviews have no charms for me. The detailed history of battles, and all the slaughters of victory, do not but disgust me. I never look with admiration upon scenes like these; unless it is when I see a brave and suffering people, borne down by oppression, rising up, with united heart, to bear back their oppressors.

In regard to the lust of conquest, which has been spoken of as being a derogation to our national character, I am ready to confess that I have heard with regret the language held by some gentlemen here about pushing forward our acquisitions, and planting the American eagle on various points of this continent, and all over the world. The expression of such sentiments is the very course to arm all the world against us. The French revolution has operated more than all other things to disgrace and overthrow all republican ideas in Europe. And why? Because the lust of conquest which grew out of and accompanied that revolution rose so high as to become a terror to the world. France—republican France—sent her armies abroad in every direction. Their movements evinced the highest military skill, and were followed every where by the most splendid victories, until French valor was at once the admiration and the dread of all surrounding nations, and the name of France was like the sound of a trumpet to the remotest bounds of the world. But what was the effect? A terrible retribution. And the memory of those conquests, and those costly victories, is now so linked to the notion of republicanism in Europe that nothing can break the association. Republican ideas must struggle up for half a century before they can reach the position they held in Europe before that great convulsion. I wish for nothing of the kind among us. I deprecate every indication of such a spirit. I believe our system of Government to be the wisest, and our institutions the happiest, which the world ever saw; and regarding as I do the happiness of my race, I hope they will spread throughout mankind; but let them spread by their own inherent moral power, until the happiness they produce shall create a spectacle for

that the whole world to see and to admire. Let this be the triumph of my country. to commit this desire her to realize the prophetic description of Archbishop Cranmer—

"Wherever the bright sun of heaven shall shine  
Her honor and the greatness of her name  
Shall be, and make new nations; she shall flourish,  
And, like a mountain cedar, reach her branches  
To all the plains about her—  
Our children's children shall see this,  
And bless Heaven."

Peaceful triumphs alone are those which I seek—the benign victories of reason and truth. These I desire, and none other. If, however, while pursuing such a policy—a policy wise, vigorous, but conciliatory, war should come upon us, I trust the country will be prepared to meet it. If it should come upon us as the result of a moderate but firm assertion of our national rights, the response in every American bosom must be, "Let it come." The venerable gentleman from Massachusetts near me, (Mr. ADAMS,) in tones which rang on my heart like a trumpet, reminded me of the days of our revolutionary glory. The old fire which blazed so brightly in that ever memorable struggle, seemed to be flashing up within him; and, whilst I listened to his patriotic strains, I felt assured that in such a cause we should all act as one man. If we should go into the war in this spirit, I should feel little anxiety as to how we should come out of it. The power of England is fast culminating to its high point. It must soon reach that climax in the history of nations from which they have, one after another, commenced their decline; and she ought not to enter into a contest with a great Power. If wise counsels prevail, she will not. Yet, if she should be so irrational, on the ground of such a controversy as that of Oregon, to rush into such a contest, I trust that she will be driven back from these shores shorn of her splendor; and she may be very sure that when this happens, it will prove no temporary eclipse, but will endure for all time to come; and she will be left a portent in the political heavens,

"Shedding disastrous twilight over half the nations."

I know her power—I know the multitude of her fleets—I know the bravery and discipline of her armies; but, in a war thus brought upon us, we ought not to waste a moment in looking at these. We ought to feel confident in our position—confident in our resources—confident in the patriotism of our people—and, above all, confident in the blessing of the great Ruler of nations. With these, and with a just cause, I feel that this country is able to resist any attack; and I am confident that we should be good against a world in arms.

But I am admonished by the clock that I must hasten to some other topics which yet remain.

I now invite gentlemen to turn their attention, for a moment, to the importance of Oregon, for I believe that its intrinsic importance has been overlooked or much undervalued. And, first, looking at it in a *political* view, it must be admitted to be of great value to us. England has a frontier to the north of us extending three thousand miles, and stretching entirely across the continent. If we permit her to come from that line some five hundred miles down the coast of the Pacific, we shall give her the opportunity of cutting up the only break which now exists in that line of continuous fortification with which her energy and vast resources have encompassed the globe. Why is it that she presses with so much earnestness and pertinacity



for a strip of land along our western borders? Is it the soil? Is it the trade? No. She could enjoy the trade if the territory was ours; and it certainly would be in that view better to resign a strip of territory than to lose a good neighbor. These, however, are not the considerations which make her so anxious and so persevering. It is the political value of the territory which, with her accustomed sagacity, she sees and appreciates. Statesmen ought not to bound their view by things which are at the moment within the range of their eyes. They ought to lift their vision, until it embraces the broad field which belongs to the future also. This the British statesmen are in the habit of doing; and we, if we are wise, will follow their example. Before we count the value of Oregon, we must look across the Pacific, and estimate that trade with China and the eastern Archipelago which is soon to open upon us in all its riches, grandeur, and magnificence. As things now exist, our vessels, returning from the ports of eastern Asia, have, as it were, to run the gauntlet through a long line of British naval posts, from which they are exposed to attack. Her numerous naval stations enable her to keep her fleets in every sea, and however widely-spread this eastern commerce may be, and however inestimable its value, it is subject in a moment to be arrested. But, if we establish our posts and plant our settlements on the shores of the Pacific, our commerce will float in comparative safety over the tranquil bosom of that wide-spread ocean. Surely, in this view of the subject, it would be poor policy in us to yield what is essential to the prosperity of our commerce in that part of the world.

Again: I regard this controversy respecting Oregon as a national question in the strictest sense of the term. I differed from some of my Whig friends respecting the annexation of Texas, for I viewed it, as I view this, as a national question. In adopting my conclusions, and in conforming to them, my course of action in relation to that important subject, I was not conscious of one particle of selfish feeling. What I did, I did for my country, for the whole country, for the welfare and aggrandizement of this nation. I was in Europe when that question was first agitated, and witnessed the jealousies of European cabinets in regard to it, and their intrigues and combinations to defeat the annexation, and I felt my American blood roused at the spectacle. I look on Oregon in just the same way; with us it is no Northern, no Southern question. I have come up here as a national representative. True, I cannot wholly divest myself of feelings which were born with me, and of early memories, which nothing can efface; but, God helping me, I intend to do strict and equal justice to all.

In my course in this Hall, I shall look alone to the national aggrandizement, and the national glory. And I know well, that in such a course the people I represent will sustain me. I have not been long enough their representative to say, with John Randolph, that no man ever had such constituents; but I have lived among them, and know them, and I know they will sustain me. I shall enter into no movement of a merely party character, nor shall I be found entering into a combination to elevate or to depress any section of the country at the expense of another. My political career may be short, and the accomplishment may fall far short of the purpose, but the conception of duty, at least, shall be glorious; and if an earnest effort to come up to it constitutes glory, then my career, long or short, shall be glorious. Gentlemen have spoken of the policy of President Monroe, who declared to the nations of the old world, that they would not be tolerated in any interference with the balance of power on this continent, and that they



Is it the trade and it certainly must establish no more colonies on our shores. I am in favor of this policy, an to lose a good far as it can with justice be carried out. Where European nations have which make her already possessions on this continent, they should be suffered to hold them territory which without molestation; but we may well oppose their planting new colonies in Statesmen ought in this our western world. The honor of this sentiment, however, it is but ment within th fair to say, belongs, justly, as much to the gentleman from Massachusetts, it embraces th (Mr. ADAMS,) as it does to Mr. Monroe; for, although the latter was the Chief British statesmen magistrate, the former was at the same time Secretary of State, and if he follow their ex did not suggest, he certainly sanctioned the policy. The present Executive look across th maintains the same doctrine; and, I doubt not, the whole country will heartily come into it.

ern Archipelago I have some facts bearing upon the *commercial* value of Oregon to us, ar, and magnifi which I deem of the first moment. England and the United States are the from the ports of only competitors for the trade of southern China; the trade of the northern h a long line of portion of China is in the hands of the Russians, and is mainly conducted Her numerous at an annual fair held at Kiachta, lasting for about two months, at which d however wide the traders of the two nations assemble and carry on their commercial imable its value actions; but south China is in the hands of England and this country, who sh our posts an are competitors for the profits of the trade. England imports every year four merce will flow hundred and fifty thousand chests of tea, while we import two hundred thou de-spread ocean sand, besides muslins and silks, and other commodities of great value. cy in us to yield

part of the world In this gainful traffic England regards us a rival power, and she is by no national question means disposed to give it up. The coast of Oregon fronts that of China, my Whig friend and presents great facilities for carrying on this important branch of our ew this, as a ne merce. Fully to avail ourselves, however, of these advantages, we ought rforming to their to connect Oregon with the State of Missouri by the construction of a rail- as not conscious road. This is not so wild and visionary a scheme as at the first view some country, for the gentlemen may be disposed to consider it.

nation. I wa Let them reflect that it is but about fifteen years since Mr. Huskisson lost nessed the jea his life in an experimental trip, between Liverpool and Manchester, over gues and com the first railroad ever constructed in England. And what is she doing in blood roused a that system now? And then look on the continent, and see already com- ith us it is n pleted a large part of one continuous line of railroad, which is to stretch out a national repre twenty-seven hundred miles, entirely across Europe, from Odessa to Bremen; gs which wen while another line will presently extend from the Adriatic for near a thou- ffice; but, God sand miles. And yet some gentlemen stand and look aghast when any one speaks of a railroad across our continent, as if it were something wondrous and altogether unheard of before. Should such a road be constructed, it nal aggrandize ill become the great highway of the world; we shall before long monopolize ch a course th the trade of the eastern coasts of Asia. At present, it is stated that the shortest ough their re possible voyage from London to Canton occupies seventy days, but it is esti- r had such con mated over such a railroad a traveller might pass from London to Canton in and I know the forty days. There is no wildness, no extravagance in the idea, but it is a matter y party charac of sober sense and plain calculation. What a magnificent idea does it present te or to depres to the mind, and who can calculate the results to which it will lead? With he political career a route so short and so direct as this, might we not reasonably hope to com- he purpose, bu mand both the trade and the travel of the world. Engrafted on this plan, earneſt effort to and as its natural adjunct, is the extension of a magnetic telegraph, which t, shall be glo will follow the course of the road; unite these two, and where is the im- onroe, who de agnation which can grasp the consequences? Whale ships, returning from be tolerated in , and that they

their long and hazardous voyages, might touch upon the Pacific coast, and instantly transmit across the continent tidings of their safety and their success.

In either of the views which I have presented, it is impossible that the importance of Oregon can be overlooked. I trust that these great results will be realized, and I hope at no distant day to see a mail line established across the continent. England has very recently been engaged in an experiment in ascertaining the shortest overland route across the Continent to the East Indies; and I believe the Oriental Steam Company has determined upon that through Germany, by Trieste; but if we construct this railroad she will then be dependent on us for the shortest and most expeditious, as well as the safest route to China and her East India possessions. Is not the language of Berkley in the progress of fulfilment, when he wrote that immortal line—

“Westward the star of empire takes its way.”

When Oregon shall be in our possession, when we shall have established a profitable trade with China through her ports, when our ships traverse the Pacific as they now cross the Atlantic, and all the countless consequences of such a state of things begin to flow in upon us, then will be fulfilled the vision which rapt and filled the mind of Nunez as he gazed over the placid waves of the Pacific.

I will now address myself for a moment to the *moral* aspect of this great question. Gentlemen have talked much and eloquently about the horrors of war. I should regret the necessity of a war; I should deplore its dreadful scenes; but if the possession of Oregon gives us a territory opening upon the nation prospects such as I now describe, and if, for the simple exercise of our rights in regard to it, Great Britain should wage upon us an unjust war, the regret which every one must feel will at least have much to counterbalance it. One of England's own writers has said: “The possible destiny of the United States of America, as a nation of one hundred millions of freemen, stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific, living under the laws of Alfred, and speaking the language of Shakspeare and Milton is an august conception.”

It is an august conception, finely embodied; and I trust in God that will, at no distant time, become a reality. I trust that the world will see through all time, our people living, not only under the laws of Alfred, but that they will be heard to speak throughout our wide-spread borders the language of Shakspeare and Milton. Above all is it my prayer that, as long as our posterity shall continue to inhabit these mountains and plains, and hills and valleys, they may be found living under the sacred institutions of Christianity. Put these things together, and what a picture do they present to the mental eye! Civilization and intelligence started in the East; they have travelled and are still travelling westward; but when they shall have completed the circuit of the earth, and reached the extreme verge of the Pacific shores; then, unlike the fabled god of the ancients, who dipped his glowing axle in the western wave, they will there take up their permanent abode; then shall we enjoy the sublime destiny of returning these blessings to their ancient seat; then will it be ours to give the priceless benefits of our free institutions, and the pure and healthful light of the Gospel back to the dark family which has so long lost both truth and freedom; then may Christianity plant herself there, and while, with one hand she points to the Polynesian isles, rejoicing in the late recovered treasure of

Pacific coast, and their success possible that these great results line established in an expedition to the Continent to the has determined to construct this railroad at an expeditious, and successful manner. Is not this what we wrote that in the revealed truth, with the other present the Bible to the Chinese. It is our duty to aid in this great work. I trust we shall esteem it as much our honor as our duty. Let us not, like some of the British missionaries, give them the Bible in one hand and opium in the other, but bless them only with the pure word of truth. I hope the day is not distant—soon, soon may its dawn arise—to shed upon the farthest and the most benighted of nations the splendor of more than a tropical sun.

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Mr. HILLIARD closed by offering an amendment, such as he had indicated in the course of his remarks.

have established ships traverse the consequences of be fulfilled the over the place

spect of this great out the horrors of its dreadful opening upon the simple exert upon us an un have much to "The possible ne hundred million, living under are and Milton

in God that the world will see of Alfred, but borders the land at, as long as oceans, and hills and nations of Christ they present to the East; they have shall have converge of the Power who dipped his their permanent these blessed priceless benefits of the Gospel and freedom one hand shall treasure of